



Veterans Home - Chippewa Falls

Family Updates 10.6.2020

Dear Families of the Veterans Home:

Someday, the months of sacrifice caused by this pandemic will be a memory. Each day you show our community such strong encouragement and support, we get closer to that time. I can't thank you enough. There truly is no greater privilege than to serve you and your family.

Since our last update, one employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19. In total, since our first confirmed case in September, three staff have tested positive for the virus, and one additional staff and one member were suspected to have the virus within our care community.

Please join us in celebrating the four individuals, mentioned in our update yesterday, who are no longer COVID-positive or COVID-suspected.

Our comprehensive COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan ensures we're taking every action possible to protect the Veterans Home members and staff by following all guidance from federal, state, and local health officials. This plan includes:

- Utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment;
- Screening and monitoring of members, staff, and visitors for symptoms;
- Testing members and staff based on federal and state guidance;
- Quarantining COVID-19 positive members with dedicated staff to provide care;
- Taking environmental safety precautions, such as disinfecting high-touch surfaces;
- Adhering to safe visitation procedures; and
- Assuring safe congregate dining and group activities.

See below to review this entire plan.

We understand visitation restrictions have been difficult for our members and families. Please know we're following guidance set by health officials. Due to our current COVID-19 outbreak status, our visitation policy allows window and virtual visits. For more information or to schedule a visit, contact Katie Plendl at 715-720-6775 or Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov Thank you for your support.

Veterans Home COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan

First and foremost, our priority is to keep everyone safe and healthy. We are in close contact with our medical director, other providers, WDVA, and state and local health officials to ensure we are taking all appropriate steps at this time. We are following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and state and local health officials

to protect our members and staff from this virus, and are taking every action possible to prevent it from spreading in our care community.

The following is a summary of our COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan.

- Utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), as directed by CMS guidelines. Staff continues to wear PPE, including masks, eye protection, gloves, and gowns depending on the community's COVID-19 status. Members are asked to wear a face covering when interfacing with others and when out of their rooms.
- Screening and monitoring members and staff for symptoms. We have increased our screening and monitoring of members and staff for COVID-19 symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

We all play a part in keeping ourselves and others healthy. Please wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, wear a mask or face covering, and practice social distancing.

We continue to educate members and staff on COVID-19. For additional information, please visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html or WI Department of Health's website at: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov.

- Tracing individuals who come in contact with anyone affected. The community will work with the tracing staff from state and local health departments to assess all who may have come in close contact with an affected individual. We will continue to follow all requirements in implementing the next steps which may include self-monitoring as determined by health officials.
- Testing members and staff for COVID-19. We are following all guidance from federal, state and local health officials on testing required for members and staff. The frequency of routine testing is determined based on the number of COVID-19 cases in the local county. Additionally, those who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms are tested to quickly identify and isolate members and staff who may be positive for COVID-19. Once there is a confirmed COVID-19 case, testing is increased to every three days to seven days until testing identifies no new cases of COVID-19 infection among staff or members for a period of at least 14 days since the most recent positive result.
- Quarantining COVID-19 positive members and implementing enhanced infection control measures. We have established a designated area in the building for any COVID-19 positive members, and they are cared for and supported by designated staff. We continue to follow all infection control protocols as outlined by the CDC, CMS, and state and local health officials. COVID-19 positive members remain in quarantine until well and cleared by medical professionals, as well as meet the CDC symptom-based criteria for return to normal activity.
- Advising COVID-19 positive staff to take all appropriate measures. For the health and well-being of our care community, any staff member with a COVID-19 diagnosis is asked to quarantine at home, contact a medical provider for care, and notify their supervisor. We are following CDC

guidance on the return-to-work criteria for health care professionals with confirmed COVID-19.

- Taking environmental safety precautions. Housekeeping staff continues to take extra measures to clean and disinfect all high-touch areas throughout the building. This includes countertops and tables, faucet handles, toilet flush handles, doorknobs, door handles, crash bars, bathroom and kitchen areas, elevator call buttons, and handrails.
- Adhering to safe visitation procedures. We are committed to offering visitation that supports each member's physical, mental, psychosocial well-being, and quality of life. Visitation may be conducted through different means based on the community's structure and members' needs, such as in member rooms, dedicated visitation spaces, outdoors, and for circumstances beyond compassionate care situations
- Please know the visitation options may vary based on the community's COVID-19 status. As of 9/30/2020, we remain in outbreak status and are able to offer window and virtual visits. To discuss current visit options and schedule a visit with a loved one, contact the community at 715-720-6775.

Window Visits: Closed window visits pose no risk of virus transmission.

Outdoor Visits: Outdoor visits pose a lower risk of virus transmission due to increased space and airflow. Therefore, outdoor visits are preferred whenever practicable.

Indoor Visits: Indoor visits will be offered based on the following guidance and criteria from CMS:

- The community has had no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days and is not currently conducting outbreak testing.
- Visitors must adhere to the core principles of infection control and will be monitored by staff, including appropriate mask use, social distancing, and hand hygiene.
- For the safety and well-being of those in the community, there are a limited number of visitors allowed at one time. Two visitors per member can be accommodated. Visits will generally take place in a common area inside the community that is cleaned and sanitized regularly and between visits. Additionally, the community maintains a calendar that identifies the days, times, and length of potential visits.

Virtual visits: We encourage loved ones to communicate with members by phone, letters, video chat, and/or social media. We understand that it is hard to not have visitors, especially family. Please contact the Life Enrichment team at 715-720-6775 for questions or assistance with these communication methods.

Compassionate care visits: Visitors who need to enter the community for compassionate care situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to assure safety for all.

Please note the community will screen visitors for COVID-19 when they arrive for outdoor, indoor, and compassionate care visits.

We are excited to see our members reunite with their loved ones when able!

- Assuring safe congregate dining and group activities. Communal dining and congregate group activities may be offered while adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention, when not in outbreak status. This includes social distancing, face covering, and appropriate hand hygiene by members and staff.

We continue to be in close communications with our medical director, other providers, WDVA, and state and local health officials. We are also monitoring new information from the CDC, CMS, and state and local health departments to ensure we are taking the appropriate next steps.

Thank you for your support and understanding; we are all in this together. Please do not hesitate to contact Katie Plendl at 715-720-6775 with any questions or concerns you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan M. Corcoran'.

Megan M. Corcoran, NHA | Administrator
Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls